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**Title :** Maternal Styles in Captive Dolphin Mothers

**Category :** Behavior

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**Abstract :** Dolphin mother-calf relationships dominate the first years of life for dolphin calves. During these years, calves depend on their mothers for nutrition, protection, comfort, and social integration. Research with humans and other nonhuman animals has shown that mothers interact with and care for their infants in different ways. These behavioral differences are reflected in maternal styles that range from restrictive to permissive. These different styles are significant because of their potential influence on offspring behavioral development (e.g., exploration, reactions to novelty, social interactions). To investigate the possibility of different maternal styles in dolphins, the current study identified and examined maternal care behaviors in seven dolphin mothers that resided at two different facilities. Two maternal proximity maintenance behaviors (herding and following), maternal discipline, and maternal interventions were selected for their potential to differentiate between individual mothers. Interactions between mothers and their calves were observed for the first year of life. There were consistent differences in maternal behaviors, suggesting that dolphin mothers have different maternal styles. In general, the observed maternal styles ranged from restrictive to permissive. Although these differences were reflected in some differences in calf behaviors, overall the calves showed similar patterns of development. This suggests that the observed maternal styles all fell within a 'normal' range of maternal care. Anecdotal comparisons revealed that one mother changed her maternal style from one calf to the next, which suggests that individual maternal styles may change. This particular change in maternal style may have been precipitated by a change in the social group (i.e., the only adult male passed away between the two offspring). The possible roles of social groups and environmental pressures on maternal style are discussed, as are the implications of different maternal styles for calf development and the possible transmission of maternal style from mother to daughter.